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AFGHANISTAN

SUCCESS STORY

Knowledge Empowers Orphaned Girls

Young girls benefit from a USAID-sponsored legal awareness workshop



Photo: USAID/RLS-Formal

Orphanage in Afghanistan attended a two-day workshop that included legal rights training and a field trip to the Kabul Appellate Court.

USAID's Rule of Law Stabilization-Formal Component project develops the human and institutional capacity of the courts, increases access to justice, and addresses public demand for rule of law.

Women in Afghanistan have faced challenges in obtaining redress through formal avenues of justice. Some women who have been outspoken on women's rights issues, such as human trafficking or violence against women, have continually received death threats, visits to their homes by gunmen, and dismissals from their jobs.

To empower young Afghan women, especially those marginalized in society, USAID conducted a two-day legal awareness workshop for a group of twenty girls from the Kabul Alauddin Orphanage. The workshop addressed the unique legal challenges that these young females may encounter.

On the first day, participants engaged in a legal information forum, followed by interactive practical group sessions discussing topics such as the rights of women under the Constitution of Afghanistan and Islam, the right to education and political participation, methods of combating forced marriage, and available mechanisms of accessing justice. The same participants took a field trip on the second day to observe justice in action at the Kabul Appellate Court. The practical courtroom experience helped to build upon the theoretical lessons of the prior day while helping to solidify the group's understanding of the Afghanistan formal justice system.

The event helped to impart much-needed guidance for these young women. "Had I known that my abusive uncle was breaking the law by not allowing me to go to school, I would not have been held back so many years in my education," said Zainab, one of the participants. "Now I know what he did was wrong and I can protect myself and my younger sister if that happens again."

The event is the first in a series of public awareness campaigns that aims to educate marginalized populations about their legal rights and avenues for accessing those rights. Amer Kamawi, Chief Judge of the Kabul Appellate Court noted, "It is especially important for us to educate Afghanistan's youth about law and legal rights. If we are going to work on the foundations of humanity, we must first work on the pillars that make up a society. In Afghanistan, that pillar is the youth because they are the only hope for a more enlightened and prosperous society."